

Empowering Communities with Knowledge: A Community-based Perspective on Vulnerability Indicators using

Participatory Action Research

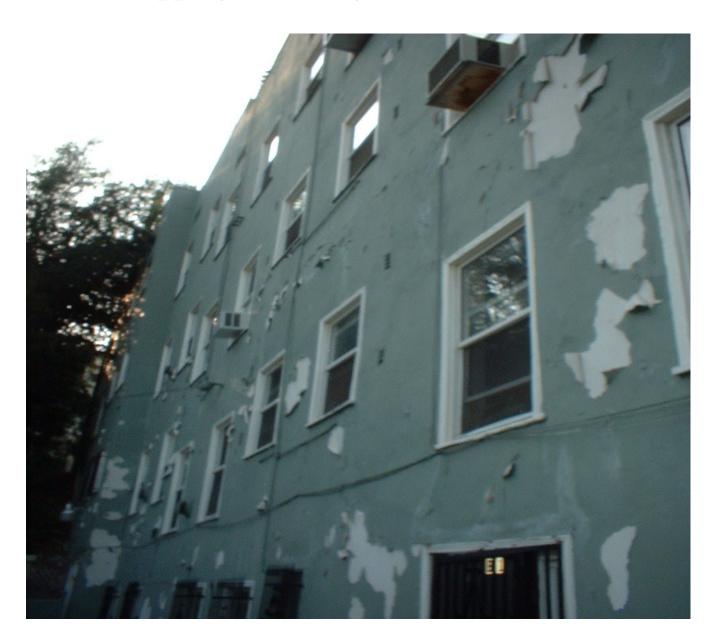
Healthy Homes Collaborative Linda Kite

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Healthy Homes Collaborative

- Is a collaboration of organizations, based in Los Angeles
- Member groups are:
 - Grassroots,
 - Community-based, and
 - Non-profit organizations
- Dedicated to addressing environmental hazards in homes and their deleterious impact on the health of our communities.

Chipping & Peeling Lead-Based Paint



Challenges Low-Income Tenants Face

- Bad Landlords
- * Callous Bureaucracies
- * Kids Used as Hazard Detectors
- Responsibility shifted to Parents (Blame)
- Lack of Political Will



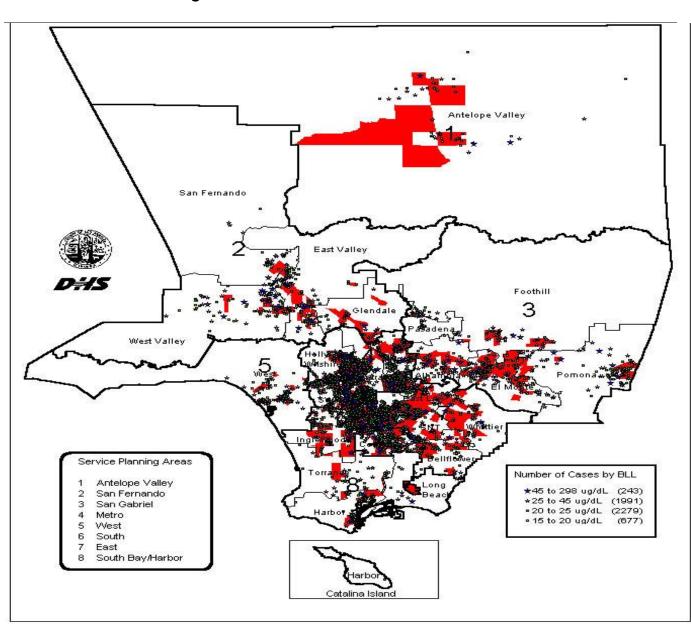


Housing Hazards and Health

- These hazards have been studied extensively by:
 - HUD
 - CDC
 - EPA
 - NHANES
 - NIEHS
- All have concluded that children's development is adversely impacted

Los Angeles County Current Conditions

Poverty
Housing
Health



Our PAR project:

was geared toward documenting the impact of environmental health hazards found in the home:

- –on children's well-being and
- -how that in turn affects their school readiness

Participatory Action Research

Combines:

- * the power of hard numbers
- with local organizing
- * to trigger community-wide systems change
- * as well as helping to protect individual families from health hazards in high-risk housing.

Two important advantages:

- -It has allowed for the collection of more accurate and relevant information;
- It has demystified the scientific information gathering process

Community proposed solutions

- By using PAR,
- * the information, and
- * the process of gathering it
- * has positively transformed the community,
- * enabling the community to take charge in proposing solutions to their problems.

Community Access to Hazard Assessment Tools

- First generation tools were complex and expensive and reserved for experts and researchers
- PAR bridges the gap
- Low-cost, low-tech tools that can be mastered with limited training
- * We trained over 300 community leaders from five distinct communities: Long Beach, Maywood, Huntington Park, and in the City of Los Angeles - Boyle Heights, and Pico-Union / Westlake

Home Hazard Assessments

* Surveys

- Visual observations of peeling paint, mold and moisture, and housing code violations
- Photographs of hazards
- Health questionnaire (87 questions)
- Visits took 2 3 hours per family

Sampling Results Report

- Lab results: Lead in dust, paint, and soil
- Measured Asthma triggers Cockroach / vermin infestations; moisture problems (mold)



Mold on Wall



The Power of "Hard Numbers" Democraticizes Science

- Engages families
- Compelling documentation of problem
- Gives credibility & punch to complaints –triggers repairs
- Can trigger laws and regulations

Some Highlights of our Findings

* Income:

> 70% reported a monthly income of less than \$1,500 monthly or \$18,000 annually

* Housing:

- ➤ 97% are tenants
 - 35% have no written contract
 - 89% are on month to month arrangements
 - 71% live in housing built before 1979
 - Only 5% reported having ever received information about lead hazards in their buildings in compliance with Title X

* Health Care:

- ➤ 80% reported having a regular health provider, including the County hospitals and neighborhood clinics
- ➤ 35% reported that at least one of their children has a health problem

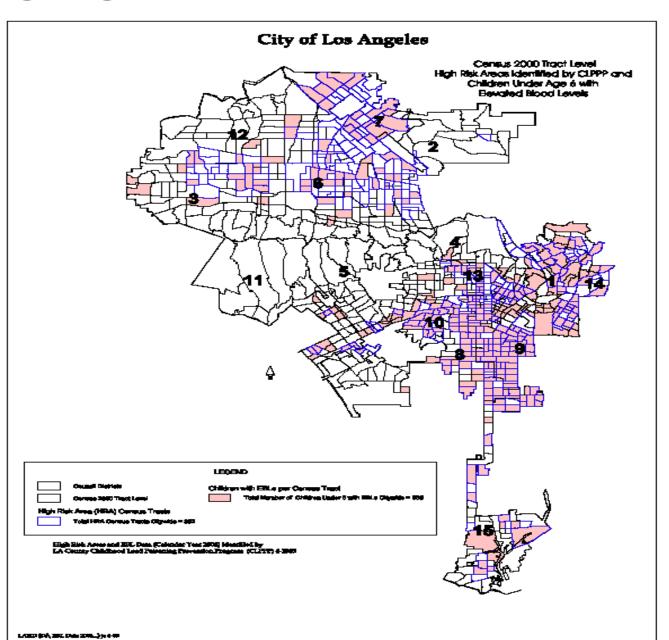
Powerful Tool for Organizing

- Environmental Sampling Activities in homes builds relationships between CBOs and community members
- * Vivid evidence of real problems
 - 80% had chipping and peeling paint
 - 65% had moisture problems and mold issues
 - 20% had water leaks on ceilings, walls or floors
 - 77% had cockroach infestations
 - 40% had vermin infestations
- Community wide context to problems unites neighbors and builds community
- Develop new skills and leaders

Engaging Community

- Vivid evidence of hazards
- Gripping photographs
- * Hard numbers
- Bold maps
- Local data are the most compelling

Highlight L.A.-Wide "Hot Spots"



Exterior Peeling Paint



Exterior of south wall of house 123 Hazard Av. Leadland, CA 90000

July 20, 2004 Photographer: M. Garcia

Systems Advocacy for Broader Policy Change

- * Improve enforcement of existing laws
- Highlight and correct agency failures
- * Win Increased Resource\$
- Pass new laws or ordinances
- * Advance organizational objectives and meet the community's needs

What Gives this Hazard Data Legal Traction?

Local housing codes

* Federal lead disclosure law

Tenant-landlord law

Common law

Federal Law Requires Landlords to: "Parents Right to know"

- Disclose known info about lead paint or lead hazards
- * Give tenant EPA Booklet
- * Lease must include
 - "Lead Warning Statement"
 - Statement Disclosing Hazards
 - List Records and Reports
 - Tenant Acknowledgement
- * Rental agents also covered
- * 94% reported they had not received the pamphlet



Property-Specific Information Turns the Table on Landlords

MODEL LAB RESULTS REPORT LABX Lab Address Lab Phone & Fax LEAD PAINT CHIP ANALYSIS REPORT Test Address: Report number: 0025431AC XXXXXXXXXXX Received Date/Time: 8/22/02 11:20 AM XXXXXXXXXXX Reported Date/Time: 8/27/02 11:35 AM Method: EPA SW846.7420 Client: AECLP 227 Massachusetts Ave, NE - Ste 200 Washington, DC 20002 AIHA Accreditation #: 102222 Porson X Account # Fax# ALLT51 202-543-4466 PersonX, QA/QC **Laboratory Results** Sample # Collected Date Total Pb µg Pb μg/g Pbµg/cm² %Pb Client Sample ID Narr Collection Loc. Analyzed Date ppm* by Wt. 11.7118% 8/17/02 28,120.0 117,118 N/A Bedroom child trim 8/26/02 8/17/02 3,441.0 7,095 N/A 0.7095% Bathroom window 8/26/02 3 8/17/02 15,185.0 28,110 N/A 2.8110% Kitchen window 8/26/02 <10.0 Not Detectable 4 8/17/02 Not N/A Family room trim 8/26/02 Detectable

Landlords in Violation Face:

- Serious penalties
 - \$11,000 fine per violation
 - Treble damages for knowing violation
- * Results-oriented enforcement by feds
 - Lead inspections of all properties
 - Control lead hazards in all properties
 - \$upport for community projects

Federal Right To Know Law + HHC's Ability to Find Out -

Turns the Table on Bad Landlords

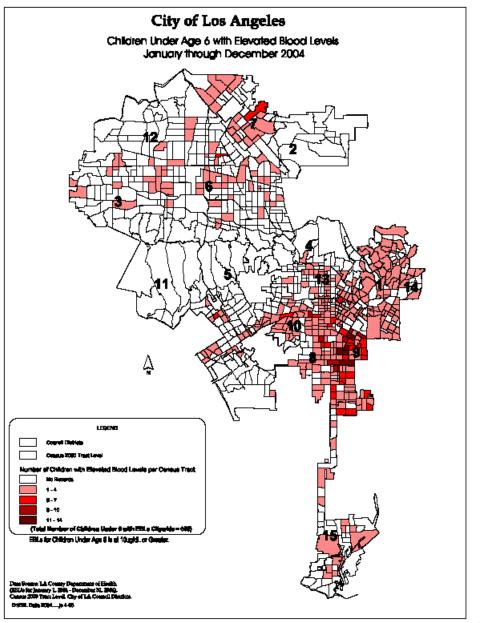
Changing Policy for Prevention

is the Ultimate Goal

* Documenting hazards can help the individual families who participated; they will use the data to turn the table on their landlords

* But HHC's long term goal is to use data to trigger broader policy change that will imapct all high-risk housing in each community

855 Children with Elevated Blood Lead Levels found in the City Los Angles Jan. – Dec. 2004



HHC's Pilot Program in City Council Districts 1, 8, 9, 13 & 14

during the 2 - year (Oct. 2003 to Sept. 2005) period we:

- -Reached over 7500 tenants in multi-family apartment buildings,
- -Conducted over 150 building wide meetings and 50 block meetings
- -Reached over 500 families living in single family homes
- -Presented at over 50 community fairs and other public events
- -Referred over 200 units for lead hazard reduction work (for the City's HUD funding)
- -Of those units referred over 130 have been completed, others are in the pipeline, or did not qualify
- -Ensured that over 1700 units were repaired using lead safe work practices and that paint was safely stabilized in each of those units

Also during the 2 - year (Oct. 2003 to Sept. 2005) period we:

- -Taught the L.A. County Department of Health Services CLPPP and the L.A. City Housing Department to learn to work together on primary prevention protocols and to coordinate their efforts with the community based organizations
- -Ensured that government efficiency increased (the L.A. City Housing Department was awarded the Harvard School of Government Award for Excellence and Efficiency in Government for this pilot program)
- -Assisted the City attorney's office in the first criminal prosecution of a landlord for lead hazards in the State of CA (and the second case in the entire country; Michigan 18 years ago was the first case)

Ethical Issues and PAR

Collecting samples is invasive:

- Going inside families' homes
- Crawling around on the floor
- Drawing sketches
- Taking photographs
- Documenting hazards
- Using data



Potential Unintended Consequences

- Panic by tenants
- * Eviction
- Sloppy and Unsafe repairs by landlord
- * Property condemned by Agencies
- * Undocumented residents with perceived increased risk of deportation

Evolution of HHC Policy Related to Privacy & Ethics

- * "Respecting and Protecting" paper by AFHH identified key issues
- * HHC Resident Agreement
- * Continuing Oversight by the HHC and CBOs

HHC Commitment to Protecting Privacy

The rights of individual residents whose homes are assessed must always be paramount to the organizing and advocacy strategies and tactics designed to benefit these families, their neighbors, and their community.

HHC Resident Agreement

- Documents mutual understanding and expectations
- * Must be signed before Home Hazard Assessment begins
- * Obligation to explain results to resident
- * Resident decides about sharing "property-specific" data with others

No Room for Error

- Protect residents' privacy
- Follow HHC's hazard assessment tools
- Submit accurate, complete, and timely data to HHC central
- Use data honestly

Trust

takes a long time to build, and is very fragile